Mr. President,

It is my pleasure to address the ECOSOC High-Level Segment. On behalf of my delegation, I extend warm congratulations on your stellar leadership in steering the work of the ECOSOC.

The theme of this year’s Ministerial Review shines the spotlight on urgent economic and social concerns that have a particular resonance in today’s turbulent economic climate. The sovereign debt crisis in the Euro Zone continues to cast its shadow on the process of economic recovery, and has further exacerbated an already serious worldwide unemployment problem.

I thank the Secretary-General for the insights offered in his reports before the Council. We concur with his recommendation that macroeconomic policies need to be realigned to give centrality to the goal of full employment. The questions of enhancing productive capacity and employment to eradicate poverty deserve the highest priority in national and international policy-making frameworks. Further, without putting developing countries, especially LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS, at the forefront of the global development agenda, we cannot realistically expect progress on the Millennium Development Goals.

Mr. President,

Current indicators present a dismal picture. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), the world is facing a serious jobs crisis with 200 million people without work, an increase of 27 million since the start of the financial crisis. In addition, many more are underemployed or in exploitative jobs, with earnings below subsistence level. 600 million jobs need to be created over the next decade to stave off the crisis – a formidable task under any circumstance. Women and young adults are the worst affected. Between 2007 and 2011, the number of unemployed young people in the 15 to 24 age bracket has increased by an unprecedented 4.5 million.

From the perspective of developing economies, the generation of productive and gainful employment on a scale that is sufficient to absorb the growing labour force is a critical element of the strategy for poverty eradication and achieving sustainable development. Labour is the sole asset of poor people. Perversely, however, in most developing countries, this vital resource is under-utilized and under-remunerated.

The heavy reliance on agriculture, high demographic growth, significant increase in youth unemployment and the impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic on the labour force has
rendered the challenge of full employment that much more difficult. Developing countries face the additional hurdle posed by different trade barriers. Such trade barriers have a deleterious effect on employment growth in developing countries. The destruction of farming livelihoods in the developing world as a result of subsidies in the developed world is a well-documented example. An early conclusion of the Doha Round so as to reflect the priorities of the Development agenda is therefore imperative.

We need to see a significant scaling up of public investment in infrastructure, technology, education, and skills development as well as social spending in order to enhance productive capacity and generate employment, particularly in the LDCs and LLDCs. Multilateral development banks, particularly the World Bank, have a role to play here in expanding lending for infrastructure development in developing countries.

**Mr. President,**

In India, we are conscious of the crucial role that full and productive employment plays in sustained growth and inclusive development. In the words of our Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh, we believe that *'the most effective weapon against poverty is employment. And, higher economic growth is the best way to generate employment.'*

We have introduced one of the largest social security measures in history through the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. This is one of the most significant direct interventions by the State to generate employment. It makes the right to work a fundamental right by providing 100 days assured wage employment annually to every rural household. It provides a social safety net, infrastructure and access to health in rural areas. At least one-third of the beneficiaries of this programme are women. Today, this scheme reaches one out of every five households in the country.

The government is also implementing the Prime Minister’s Employment Generation Programme to provide employment opportunities to individual entrepreneurs and self help groups, including women, in both rural and urban areas. Financial assistance is provided along with various backward and forward linkages such as entrepreneurship development training, exhibitions, marketing and awareness generation camps. Under our National Health Insurance Scheme RSBY initiated in 2008, we are providing cashless health cover to people below the poverty line. Today the RSBY covers about 25 million workers in the unorganized sector.

We have exerted effort to scale up our skill development programmes and extend them through the length and breadth of our country. Under the National Skill Development Mission, the government takes a collaborative approach together with the private sector, technology developers, and NGOs. The target is to impart skills to 500 million youth by 2022.

This is particularly relevant in our case as India is experiencing a population ‘bulge’ in the working age group. India has the youngest population in the world; its median age in 2000 was less than 24 compared to 38 for Europe and 41 for Japan. The number of persons below the age of 35 years in India is about 70 percent of our total population. 225 million
Indians are between the ages of 10-19 years. Skills development and enhancing productive capacity are therefore critical. If we get it right, it could be a potential demographic dividend for us. However, if not properly addressed, we could be facing a 'demographic nightmare'.

We have enacted the Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act for providing better education to our youth. We have increased public resources to our major endeavour in education - the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan which is the national policy to universalize primary education. In addition, the Prime Minister’s Bharat Nirman scheme on the six critical areas of rural infrastructure is designed to enhance rural activities and generate more income and rural employment.

Mr. President,

We are meeting here less than a month after the historic Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development. Member-states individually and the international community collectively will have to show determined and bold action to pursue the ambitious agenda on poverty eradication and sustainable development set by our leaders in Rio. It is abundantly clear that we cannot afford the luxury of a business as usual approach.

Overcoming the challenges of global unemployment is a pre-requisite to banish poverty and achieve the MDGs. We must take concerted action to create an enabling environment at the international and national level for promoting full employment while improving productive capacity.

I thank you, Mr. President.

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